punishable under Section 24 of the Emigration Act, 1983. Instances of Indian women workers abroad, being in distress, are brought to the notice of this Ministry from time to time and immediate remedial measures are taken through our Missions abroad.

Demonstration in front of White House

†3315. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether some Indian workers have demonstrated in front of White House in America on the misuse of visas;

(b) whether the above said matter has been taken up with the concerned officers;

(c) whether Indian companies are involved in it;

(d) whether the above said matter has been investigated; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (e) As per the reports received from the Indian Mission in USA, 590 Indian workers were recruited and deployed in the yards of M/s Signal International, a marine fabircation company, locted at Mississippi and Texas. They had gone to US on H2B visas (Guest Workers Visa Programme) valid initially for 10 months, extendable at the discretion of the employer and the US authorities. The workers were aggrieved on account of alleged poor accommodation and amenities, deductions from their salary for accommodation, food, electricity water and also non-fulfilment of alleged initial commitment of permanent residency status.

The workers demonstrated outside the office of their employer, held a press conference, filed a court case against their employer, met the Indian Ambassador in Washington and also demonstrated in front of the White House.

The Indian Mission in USA has approached the US Government to conduct a detailed investigation on the complaints of Indian workers and take remedial measures. The Indian Mission has also taken steps to withhold visas from the main US recruiters involved to prevent them from entering India to conduct recruiting operations.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has suspended the license of M/s Dewan Consultants, Mumbai, the Indian recruiting agent involved in this recruitment, and M/s. S. Mansur & Co., Mumbai, black listed the foreign employer and is also initiating legal action against the Recruiting Agent for violation of Emigration Act, 1983.

Indian workers in American shipyard

3316. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:
SHRI DARA SINGH:

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of plight of over a hundred Indian workers allegedly kept in Subhuman conditions at a shipyard on America's Gulf Coast;

(b) whether these workders have allegedly paid up to Rs. 8—10 lakh to a Mumbai recruiter

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

working for marine services company "Signal International" in return for a promise of green cards and permanent US residency;

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take "to stop rogue recruiters"; and

(d) the time Government required to bring forward an amendment to Emigration Act, 1983, for more stringent punishment for fraudulent recruitment agencies?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) As per the reports received from the Indian Mission in USA, 590 Indian workers were recruited and deployed in the yards of M/s Signal International, a marine fabrication company, located at Mississippi and Texas. They had gone to US on H2B visas (Guest Workers Visa Programme) valid initially for 10 months, extendable at the discretion of the employer and the US authorities. The workers were aggrieved on account of alleged poor accomodation and amenities, deductions from their salary for accommodation, food, electricity, water and also non-fulfilment of alleged initial commitment of permanent residency status. The workers have alleged that they have paid Rs. 6—9 lakhs at the time of recruitment as commission to the recruiting firm in India on the promise of long term employment/permanent residency/ green card in USA.

The Indian Mission in USA has approached the US Government to conduct a detailed investigation on the complaints of Indian workers and take remedial measures. The Indian Mission has also taken steps to withhold visas from the main US recruiters involved to prevent them from entering India to conduct recruiting operations.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has suspended the licenses of M/s Dewan Consultants and M/s. S. Mansur & Co., Mumbai, black listed the foreign employer and is also initiating legal action against the Recruiting Agent for violation of Emigration Act, 1983.

Further, action is taken against recruiting agents on receipt of complaints by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs under the provision of Emigration Act, 1983, leading to suspension and cancellation of their registration certificate/license in serious cases. In respect of unregistered recruiting agents, the complaints are referred to concerned State Government/ Police Authorities/Protectors of Emigrants for investigation and action for violation of Section 10 of Emigration Act 1983 and other provisions of the law as appropriate. in respect of complaint against the foreign employer (FE), FE is placed in the Prior Approval Category (Black list) and as a consequence is not allowed to recruit workers from India.

(d) Action has already been initiated for comprehesnive amendment of the Emigration Act, 1983.

Selection of more districts under BRGF Scheme

3317. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal under active consideration of the Union Government to conduct a survey to select more districts in the country to be covered under the Backward Regions Grant Fund Scheme;

(b) if so, the details thereof particularly Azamgah district in Uttar Pradesh alongwith the criteria followed, State-wise; and